

Dear Consul,

I'm in Trinidad, but my lawyer in Florida says I have to get some legal documents stamped by the Embassy. How can I do this, and what are the requirements?

Diane from Scarborough

American Citizen's Service is the section that provides notary services at the Embassy. This is normally what it means to have something "stamped" by the Embassy. Instructions for scheduling a notary service follow later in this article, but please note the following before you come in.

Please be advised that the Embassy will not "**authenticate**" any document. That means we cannot prove that a document is original or authentic. A "notary" service only guarantees the signature of the person who signed the document. If you wish to have a document notarized, you can bring in the document, unsigned, and you can request a notary service, but please note that you will be charged US\$50 for each notarial. This is calculated based on each time the Notary Public must sign/stamp the documents.

To save your time and money, we recommend you ask the lawyer whether they would accept your documents if they were notarized by a Trinidadian notary, and whether an Apostille stamp is necessary. An Apostille is basically the same thing as an Embassy notarial, which is to certify the authenticity of the signature on the document. The Apostille ensures that public documents issued in one country will be recognized as valid in another country. You can get the Apostille at the Ministry of Legal Affairs on South Quay in Port of Spain.

The U.S. and Trinidad are both parties to the 1961 Hague Convention, so they will recognize each other's publicly (non-Embassy) notarized documents. For example, Florida's state government website explains, "With the Apostille, the document is entitled to recognition in the country of intended use, and **no further authentication or legalization by the embassy or consulate of the foreign country** is required."

If you still wish to have your notary service performed at the Embassy, please follow the instructions on our website at <http://trinidad.usembassy.gov> for scheduling an appointment with the American Citizen's Service Section. Make sure you bring all of the documents with you to the appointment, and be sure to have your lawyer explain exactly where on the document you should sign, and where to have them notarized. Please do not send any documents to the Embassy beforehand, as we cannot accept them prior to your interview.

You can also check out our website for more information on Notaries at http://trinidad.usembassy.gov/notaries_certifications.html. We hope this has been helpful.